

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02529 01 OF 05 301444Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

SCCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

----- 125947

R 301400Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7338

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 5 MANAGUA 2529

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NU

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT: AN ERA OF BETTER POLITICAL FEELINGS

SUMMARY: POLITICAL TEMPERS WHICH PEAKED IN THE FIRST MONTH AFTER THE DECEMBER 27 FSLN ATTACK AT LOS ROBLES HAVE RECEDED IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. THIS HAS BEEN MANIFESTED IN LESS HARASSMENT OF PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO; GREATER FREEDOM OF DEBATE IN CONGRESS AND WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY; AND SIGNS OF RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHURCH AND PRIVATE SECTOR. TENSIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY THE GON'S KEY HANDLING OF THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRIKE IN FEBRUARY, STEPS TOWRAD DEPERSONALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, AND THE DOWNGRADING OF SOME OF THE REGIME'S MORE AGGRESSIVE SPOKESMEN. THE PROCESS HAS PERHPAS BEEN ABETTED BY THE MEDIA CONSORSHIP IMPOSED SINCE DECEMBER AND DEFINITELY BY THE ABSENCE OF A SERIOUS RECURRENCE OF FSLM ACTIVITY IN URBAN AREAS. IT MAY HAVE BEEN SLOWED DOWN, HOWEVER, BY THE USUAL ACCUSATIONS CONCERNING NEPOTISM AND MISFEASANCE WITHING THE REGIME. WHETHER THE SOFTER MOOD WILL

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02529 01 OF 05 301444Z

CONTINUE DEPENDS MOSTLY ON THE GOVERNMENT SINCE THE OPTIONS

AVAILABLE TO THE NONVIOLENT OPPOSITION ARE RATHER CIRCUM-
SCRIBED. HOWEVER, THE NEUTRALIST FORCES OF THE CHURCH AND
PRIVATE SECTOR MAY INDIRECTLY EXERT INFLUENCE IN DETERMINING
HOW LONG THE CURRENT MOOD WILL LAST, AND CERTAINLY THE FSLN,
IF IT HAS THE CAPABILITY, COULD INTERRUPT IT ABRUPTLY. END SUMMARY

1. POLITICAL TEMPERS AND TENSIONS WHICH REACHED A CREST DURING
THE MONTH FOLLOWING THE LOS ROBLES TERRORIST INCIDENT ON
DECEMBER 27, 1974, APPEAR TO HAVE SUBSIDED APPRECIABLY IN
THE LAST SEVERAL WEEKS. THE SPIRIT OF CONFRONTATION AND
RECRIMINATION WHICH SO CHARACTERIZED THAT PERIOD ON THE PART
OF BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND ITS OPPONENTS HAS GIVEN WAY TO A
MORE COMTEMPLATIVE MOOD, MARKED BY SMALL GESTURES OF
TOLERANCE ON BOTH SIDES. IT IS DEBATABLE, HOWEVER, WHETHER THIS
NEW AMBIENCE SIGNALS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW POLITICAL PHASE OR
WHETHER IT ONLY REPRESENTS THE EYE OF A HURRICANE
WITH TURBULENCE FORE AND AFT. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES IT
USEFUL TO REVIEW THE COMPONENTS OF THE CURRENT DETENTE
TO ASSESS WHETHER THEY HERALD A NEW POLITICAL STAGE
OR WHETHER THEY ARE MERELY EVANESCENT OUTGROWTHS
OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

2. MOST OF THE SPECULATION CONCERNING AN "ERA OF BETTER
FEELINGS" REVOLVES UNSURPRISINGLY ABOUT THE FIGURE OF
PEDRO JOAQUIN CHAMORRO, EDITOR OF LA PRENSA, PRESIDENT
OF THE UNION OF DEMOCRATIC LIBERATION (UDEL) AND
PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S MOST VISIBLE ANTAGONIST. SINCE
THE DEFROCKING OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADER FERNANDO
AGUERO FOLLOWING THE 1972 EARTHQUAKE, MUCH OF THE POL-
ITICAL TUG-OF-WAR BETWEEN PRO AND ANTI-GOVERNMENT
FORCES HAS IN FACT BEEN COMPOSED OF THE GIVE AND TAKE
BETWEEN SOMOZA AND CHAMORRO. CENSORSHIP OF LA PRENSA
DURING THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRIKE IN 1974, THE
DIVESTING OF CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS OF THE 27 WHO ADVOCATED
ABSTENTION IN THE 1974 ELECTIONS, THE AMADA PINEDA LIBEL
CASE, AND THE FORMATION OF THE BROAD-SPECTRUMED UDEL
ITSELF HAD COMBINED BY THE LATTER PART OF DECEMBER 1974
TO BUILD UP TENSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO WHICH
APPEARED TO MANY TO BE AS MUCH PERSONAL AS POLITICAL.
WHILE CONFUSING TO SOME, SOMOZA'S SPECIFIC VINDICTIVENESS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 02529 01 OF 05 301444Z

TOWARD CHAMORRO FOLLOWING THE FSLN TERRORIST INCIDENT
AT LOS ROBLES, WHICH SEEMED NOT TO INVOLVE CHAMORRO AT
ALL, CAN PROBABLY BE EXPLAINED IN THIS LIGHT. BASED ON THE
FLIMSIEST OF EVIDENCE, SOMOZA HAD CONVINCED HIMSELF
THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF UDEL, THE SANDINISTA ATTACK,
AND A LONG-RUMORED NEW CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRIKE
(THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS UNION, SCAAS, IS AFFILIATED WITH
UDEL) WERE CONNECTED AND CONSEQUENTLY SINGLED CHAMORRO

OUT FOR VILIFICATION, HARASSMENT AND MUZZLING IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH. INSTEAD OF HURTING HIM, HOWEVER, THE ATTACKS HELPED CATAPULT CHAMORRO TO HIS PRESENT POSITION AS THE ACKNOWLEDGED MOST IMPORTANT OPPOSITION FIGURE IN THE COUNTRY. BECAUSE OF THIS PERVERSE RESULT AND THE UN-SEEMLY SPECTACLE OF SOMOZA ENGAGING IN A PERSONAL VENDETTA, SOMOZA FOLLOWERS VERY EARLY ON BEGAN TO REGISTER THEIR DISQUIET ABOUT THE STRUGGLE. BUT THEY HAD THE USUAL PROBLEM OF DETERMINING WHO WOULD BELL THE CAT AND COUNSEL THE PRESIDENT AGAINST HIS POLICY LINE. IN THE EVENT, IT WAS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02529 02 OF 05 301557Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

SCCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

----- 127116

R 301400Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7339

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 5 MANAGUA 2529

MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT, J. ANTONIO MORA, WHO EARLY IN MARCH SUCCESSFULLY PERSUADED HIS CHIEF TO LAY OFF CHAMORRO (MANAGUA 1697). THE RESULTS OF THE NEW POLICY WERE IMMEDIATELY PERCEIVED WHEN CHAMORRO FINALLY OBTAINED AN EXIT PERMIT TO TRAVEL ABROAD, UDEL CELEBRATED THREE WELL-ATTENDED RALLIES WITH A MINIMUM OF HARASSMENT, AND THE SPECIOUS CHARGES AGAINST CHAMORRO FOR VIOLATING MARTIAL LAW AND INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FSLN WERE PIGEONHOLED. ALTHOUGH CHAMORRO'S BITING EDITORIALS IN LA PRENSA ARE STILL PROHIBITED UNDER THE CENSORSHIP ESTA-

BLISHED WITH THE INVOCATION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE IN DECEMBER, THE NEWSPAPER'S CRITICAL COVERAGE OF EVENTS INVOLVING THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO EXPAND.

3. THE PARTIAL REVIVAL OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSERVATIVE PARTY ALONG WITH THE SEEMINGLY MORE INDEPENDENT STANCE OF CONGRESS IN GENERAL HAS SERVED AS A USEFUL OUTLET FOR POLITICAL PASSIONS AND FURSTRATIONS DURING THE PERIOD AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE RELAXATION OF TENSIONS. THE FULL-SCALE DELIBERATION ON THE BILL ESTABLISHING THE INSTITUTE OF CAMPESINO WELFARE (INVIERNO) CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02529 02 OF 05 301557Z

WHEREIN BOTH LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES PARTICIPATED IN MODIFYING THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH'S DRAFT BILL WAS ONE MANIFESTATION OF THIS. THE MOSTLY CONSERVATIVE--BUT BIPARTISAN ATTACKS--ON MINISTER OF ECONOMY, JUAN JOSE MARTINEZ, IN THE MALODOROUS CASE OF THE IMPORTATION OF STEEL RODS WAS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF ALLOWING CONGRESS ITS HEAD. MEDIA REPORTAGE OF THE DEBATES HAS ENCOURAGED THE VIEW THAT FREE DEBATE IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS CANNOT ONLY EXIST WITHIN THE SOMOZA SYSTEM, BUT CAN ACTUALLY AFFECT GOVERNMENT POLICIES. THIS HAS GREATLY MITIGATED THE FEELING OF POLITICAL IMPOTENCE BY THE OPPOSITION WHOSE FRUSTRATION HAD BEEN APPROACHING WORRISOME LEVELS RECENTLY AND HAS GIVEN THEM A NEW INTEREST IN CONGRESS.

4. ALTHOUGH THE PRIMARY BENEFICIARIES OF THE LESS RESTRICTIVE ATMOSPHERE IN CONGRESS HAVE BEEN THE PARLIAMENTARY CONSERVATIVES, THE SPECTACLE OF LIBERAL CONGRESSMEN TAKING ISSUE WITH THE GOVERNMENT HAS PARADOXICALLY PROVEN TO BE A TONIC FOR THE LIBERAL PARTY AS WELL. A VIGOROUS AND CREATIVE ORGANISM FROM THE LUIS SOMOZA ADMINISTRATION WELL INTO THE PRESENT SOMOZA'S FIRST TERM, THE PARTY HAS BEEN GREATLY ECLIPSED BY THE SOMOZA PERSONA IN RECENT YEARS AND HAS ALSO BEEN NEARLY LOBOTOMIZED IN THE PROCESS. UNDER THESE CONDITIONS, THE ALMOST INADVERTENT APPROBATORY REACTION OF THE LOS ROBLES INCIDENT BY SOME LIBERALS, WHO REVELED IN SOMOZA'S PERSONAL DISCOMFITURE, WAS NOT SURPRISING IN RETROSPECT. BUT THE REGIME'S RESPONSE OF ENCOURAGING A LITANY OF LOYALTY OATHS FROM PARTY CADRES, NIPPED THESE INCHOATE DISSIDENCES IN THE BUD AND IMPOSED A NEW BLANKET OF CONFORMITY ON THE PARTY. AS A RESULT, FOLLOWING THE RECENT CONGRESSIONAL DEBATES, THE EMBASSY FOUND LIBERAL CADRES WHO NOT ONLY POINTED WITH SOME PRIDE TO THE OPENNESS OF THE SOMOZA REGIME, BUT WHO SEEMED TO BE RATHER RELIEVED TO FIND THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO CRITICIZE ELEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY WITHOUT BEING ACCUSED OF DISLOYALTY TO THE SYSTEM ITSELF.

5. PART OF THE NEW LLOK IN THE LIBERAL PARTY DERIVES FROM THE WEAKENING OF THE POSITION OF PLN SECRETARY AND LOWER HOUSE PRESIDENT CORNELIO HUECK, NEARLY UNIVERSALLY DETESTED BECAUSE

OF HIS AUTHORITARIANISM AND CORRUPTION. AS THE ARBITRARY
PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY UNTIL LAST YEAR, HUECK,
WITH CONSTANT ACCESS TO SOMOZA, HAD BEEN THE DOMINANT FIGURE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 02529 02 OF 05 301557Z

IN THE LEGISLATURE. MORE RECENTLY HE HAS FACED SUCCESSFUL
CHALLENGES FROM BOTH SIDES OF AISLE, INDICATING THAT
HIS MANTLE OF PROTECTION HAS SLIPPED CONSIDERABLY TO THE RE-
JOICING OF NEARLY EVERYONE.

6. MUCH OF SOMOZA'S IMMEDIATE REACTION TO THE LOS ROBLES
INCIDENT WAS COLORED BY HIS EXPECTATION THAT THIS WAS ONLY
THE FIRST PHASE IN A CONSPIRACY WHICH ALSO INCLUDED THE
LONG-PREDICTED STRIKE OF THE COMMUNIST CONSTRUCTION WORKERS'
(SCAAS). SOMOZA HAD TAKEN HIS LUMPS LAST YEAR WHEN THE
CONSTRUCTION WORKERS STRUCK IN SYMPATHY WITH THE HOSPITAL
WORKERS, A CHALLENGE MET FIRST BY A HARD-LINE GOVERNMENT
ATTITUDE, AND THEN BY CAPITULATION. HOWEVER, WHEN SCAAS DID
FINALLY GO OUT IN STRIKE IN FEBRUARY, THE GON WISELY ADOPTED
A HANDS-OFF, EXTREMELY LOW PROFIEL POLICY WHICH PAID OFF
HANDSOMELY WHENZHE STRIKE EFFORT COLLASPED OF ITS OWN WEIGHT.
THE UTTER LACK OF CONFRONTATIONAL TACTICS IN A
SITUATION SIMILAR TO THE YEAR BEFORE, WON THE GON THE GRUDGING
RESPECT OF ITS DETRACTORS AND SEEMED TO INSTILL NEW CONFIDENCE
IN THE REGIME AT AN IMPORTANT JUNCTURE.

7. THE MOST CONSTANT PRESENCE ON THE POLITICAL SCENE SINCE
SHORTLY AFTER THE LOS ROBLES ATTACK HAS BEEN THAT OF THE MILITARY
COURT OF INVESTIGATION, ESTABLISHED UNDER MARTIAL LAW TO GET
TO THE BOTTOM OF THE INCIDENT. WHILE ALL AGREE THAT THE COURT HAS
HAD A GREAT IMPACT ON THE PRESENT AMBIENCE, THERE IS SOME
DISPUTE ABOUT ITS PRECISE CONTRIBUTION. FOR THOSE WHO REMEM-
BERED THE HIGH-HANDED MILITARY COURTS ESTABLISHED TO DEAL WITH
THE GRAND HOTEL PUTSCH IN 1967, THE FAIRNESS AND REASONABLEMESS
OF THE MILITARY INVESTIGATORS HAS BEEN A WELCOME SURPRISE
WHICH HAS ASSISTED IN REDUCING TENSION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT
AND THE OPPOSITION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE REVELATIONS

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02529 03 OF 05 301604Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

SCCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

----- 127279

R 301400Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7340

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 5 MANAGUA 2529

BEFORE THE COURT OF FSLN ACTIVITY, BY LIMNING NOT ONLY THE UNEXPECTED EXTENT OF THE ORGANIZATION BUT THE FACT THAT MANY OF ITS SUPPORTERS WERE BY NO MEANS MARXIST-ORIENTED, SEEMS TO HAVE INTRODUCED A NEW ELEMENT OF UNEASE. MOREOVER, THE OPPONENTS OF THE REGIME, WHILE CONCEDED THAT THE COURT IS NOT AS BAD AS FEARED, STILL VIEW MILITARY JUSTICE FOR CIVILIANS IN ANY FORM AS INCOMPATIBLE WITH OPEN POLITICAL COMPETITION AND THEIR IRE IS RESTRAINED ONLY BY THE EXPECTATION THAT THE PROCEDURE WILL TERMINATE SOON.

8. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TWO KEY SWING GROUPS--THE CHURCH AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR--HAVE SHOWN DISTINCT SIGNS OF IMPROVEMENT DURING THE POST-ROBLES PERIOD. INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF THE SOMOZA REGIME IN RECENT YEARS, THE LEADING LIGHTS OF THE CHURCH APPEAR TO HAVE BACKED OFF A BIT, PERHAPS EVEN ANTEDATING THE LOS ROBLES INCIDENT BY A FEW WEEKS. ALTHOUGH THE NICARAGUAN HIERARCHY STAYED AWAY FROM THE SOMOZA INAUGURATION, THE USUAL CHRISTMAS SEASON CAMPAIGN BY THE CHURCH REQUESTING AMNESTY FOR FSLN PRISONERS WAS GREATLY TONED DOWN. POTENTIAL CRITICISM OF THE GOVERN-
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGUA 02529 03 OF 05 301604Z

MENT'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FSLN INCIDENT, A POPULAR THEME IN JANUARY, WAS INHIBITED ON THE CHURCH SIDE BY THE ARCH-BISHOP'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE LOS ROBLES NEGOTIATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE PHYSICAL SEARCH OF A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND THE DETENTION OF SOME OF ITS COMMUNICANTS IN JANUARY RAISED HACKLES, THE CHURCH HAS BEEN NOTICEABLY SILENT ABOUT SUBSEQUENT NATIONAL GUARD ANTI-GUERRILLA OPERATIONS. MUCH MORE

SURPRISINGLY, SOME OF SOMOZA'S MOST PROMINENT CRITICS IN THE CHURCH LIKE THE ARCHBISHOP, THE BISHOP OF MATAGALPA, AND THE VICAR OF MANAGUA, HAVE GRACED PUBLIC FUNCTIONS, NOT ONLY AT THE BEHEST OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS, BUT OF THE IMMEDIATE SOMOZA FAMILY AS WELL. THERE ARE THOSE WHO BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH MAY HAVE BEEN BOUGHT OFF IN SOME WAY ON THE QUESTION OF THE REBUILDING OF THE MANAGUA CATHEDRAL. BUT ALTHOUGH POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE A FACTOR IN THE DENTENTE, MORE LIKELY THE CHURCH IS WAITING FOR ALL THE DUST STIRRED UP BY THE SANDINISTA INCIDENT TO SETTLE SO THAT IT CAN MORE CLEARLY PERCEIVE ITS PRECISE POLITICAL ROLE.

9. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE GOVERNMENT HAVE HAD THEIR UPS AND DOWNS SINCE THE INCIDENT, BUT WHAT APPEARS TO BE A NET IMPROVEMENT HAS HELPED FOSTER A BETTER OVER-ALL CLIMATE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS STILL IRRITATED THE BUSINESSMEN BY ITS ARBITRARY EFFORTS TO STIFLE THEIR CRITICISM OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES, NOT ONLY CONCERNING CONTINUATION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE, BUT ON MORE LEGITIMATE ECONOMIC ISSUES AS WELL. BUT DEFINITE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN INSTITUTIONALIZING A REGULAR DIALOG BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IMPORTANT BUSINESS GROUPS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING A ONCE A MONTH SESSION WITH SOMOZA. THIS APPEARS TO BE DUE IN GOOD PART TO THE SOOTHING EFFORTS OF PRESIDENTIAL SECRETARY CARLOS DUBON TO BRIDGE THE GAP OF RECRIMINATION AND MISUNDERSTANDING. HOWEVER, AS MUCH AS THEY APPRECIATE THE IMPORTANT GESTURE TOWARDS BETTER COMMUNICATION, BUSINESSMEN SEEM UNCONVINCED THAT THEIR INPUT WILL BE EFFECTIVE. THE PROBLEM OF THE SUSPENSION OF STEEL BAR IMPORTS AND THE FAILURE OF EITHER PARTY TO CONCEDE MUCH GROUND ON THE ELECTRICITY RATE INCREASES MAY SUGGEST A LEAKY TRUCE.

10. SOMOZA'S HIGHLY PERSONALIZED FORM OF GOVERNING CHARACTERIZED BY OVERLY CENTRALIZED DECISION-MAKING AND A CERTAIN CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 02529 03 OF 05 301604Z

LACK OF GENEROSITY ABOUT DIVVING UP THE PUBLICITY ACCOMPANYING GOVERNMENT ACTS, HAS EXPOSED HIM TO CRITICISM OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE DEGREE OF HIS OBJECTIVE SUCCESSES OR FAILURES. LONG COUNSELED TO STEP INTO THE BACKGROUND A BIT AND LET OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS, SOMOZA'S CONDUCT IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS INDICATED THAT HE FINALLY MAY BE HEEDING THE ADVICE. AT LEAST CABINET MEMBERS, THROUGH THEIR ACTIVITIES, HAVE GIVEN EVERY IMPRESSION THAT THEY ARE MORE FIRMLY IN CHARGE OF THEIR PORTFOLIOS THAN EVER BEFORE AND HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED CLOSELY IN THE EYE OF THE MEDIA WITH THEIR OWN PET PROJECTS WITH ONLY PERFUNCTORY REFERENCE TO THEIR MAXIMUM LEADER. SOMOZA CUT HIS PUBLIC APPEARANCES SHARPLY IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE LOS ROBLES INCIDENT, AND BOTH HE AND THE COUNTRY APPEAR TO HAVE BENEFITED BY THE ABSENCE OF THE ALMOST ENDLESS OB-

SEQUIOUS PICTORIAL AND EDITORIAL COVERAGE OF HIS EVERY MOVE IN THE SOMOZA-OWNED NOVEDADES. ALTHOUGH HE HAS MADE MORE CEREMONIAL APPEARANCES OF LATE, THE MEDIA TREATMENT CONTINUES TO BE MORE TASTEFUL THAN BEFORE. GREATER AUTHORITY FOR HIS CABINET MINISTERS, MANY OF WHOM (E.G# KLAUS SENGLMANN, ARMEL GONZALEZ, ADAN CAJINA) ARE WIDELY RESPECTED IN THEIR OWN RIGHT, PLUS THE VERY EFFECTIVE STAFF WORK OF DUBON HAVE APPRECIABLY RAISED THE GOVERNMENT'S IMAGE OF EFFEC-TIVENESS, BLURRED SOMOZA'S OWN OMNIPRESENT IMAGE, AND HAVE THEREBY GIVEN THE OPPOSITION A MUCH SMALLER TARGET TO AIM AT.

11. IN NARROWER TERMS, THE SOFTER MODD ALSO MAY OWE MUCH TO THE PRESENCE OF ANTONIO MORA AS MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT INSTEAD OF LEANDRO MARIN. MARIN CONSIDERED HIMSELFMMV THE REGIME'S IDEOLOGICAL PALADIN AND AGGRESSIVELY SOUGHT OUT CONFRONTATIONS WITH NON-SOMOCISTA GROUPS AS A MATTER OF

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02529 04 OF 05 301614Z

53

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

SCCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

----- 127437

R 301400Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7341

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 4 OF 5 MANAGUA 2529

COURSE. MORA SEEMS TO AVOID THEM LIKE THE PLAGUE, PRE-FERRING TO HANDLE ISSUES QUIETLY AND REFERRING THE TOUGHER ONES TO SOMOZA WITH HIS OWN ADVISE. SINCE SOMOZA HAS TRADI-

TIONALLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO EMBROIL HIMSELF IN POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS IF AT ALL POSSIBLE. THIS HAS RESULTED IN ISSUES BEING DEALT WITH MORE ON A TECHNICAL THAN POLITICAL LEVEL. THIS HAS ALSO LED TO SOME VAPIDITY AND DRIFT IN THE DEFINITION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLITICAL PURPOSE, BUT IT HAS BEEN WELCOMED BY MOST.

12. THE PRESENT MOOD OF BETTER FEELINGS MIGHT HAVE PROSPERED EVEN MORE IF NOT FOR THE TWO TRADITIONAL BUGABOOS OF THE SOMOZA SYSTEM--NEPOTISM AND CORRUPTION. RUMORS OF PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT AND PAYOFFS IN THE STEEL BAR IMPORT CASE, THE STILL INEXPLICABLE RATE INCREASES BY THE POWER AND LIGHT COMPANY HEADED BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA'S UNCLE, AND THE SUSPECTED RIP-OFF OF BEAN CULTIVATING CAMPESINOS BY SOMOZA'S SECOND SON AND NEPHEW HAVE KEPT THE OPPOSITION AND THE FENCE-SITTERS MINDFUL AND CRITICAL OF THE BASIC WEAKNESSES OF THE REGIME.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02529 04 OF 05 301614Z

13. THIS PICTURE OF POLITICAL DETENTE IS SKEWED (OR ASSISTED, DEPENDING ON YOUR POINT OF VIEW) BY TWO FACTORS: CENSORSHIP AND THE LACK OF A FOLLOW-UP BY THE FSLN. THE TONING DOWN OF LA PRENSA, ESPECIALLY THE SILENCING OF CHAMORRO'S BITING EDITORIAL COMMENT, PLUS THE HEAVY FILTRATION OF THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY ASSISTED THE GON GREATLY IN KEEPING DOWN THE LEVEL OF POLITICAL PASSIONS. SOME SAY, FOR INSTANCE, THAT THE CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' STRIKE COULD NOT HAVE BEEN HANDLED SO WELL IF LA PRENSA HAD BEEN UNFETTERED. (WE ARE SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL OF THIS, BELIEVING THAT THE MAJOR REASON WAS THE LACK OF CONVICTION ABOUT THE JUSTNESS OF ITS CASE BY THE UNION, THE GENERAL PUBLIC AND THE EMPLOYEES.) CERTAINLY, THE SOFTER ATTITUDE TOWARD CHAMORRO PERSONALLY WOULD HAVE BEEN IMMENSELY MORE DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT WITHOUT CENSORSHIP. THE MEDIA HAS BEEN ALLOWED TO COMMENT ON SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EMBARRASMENTS, BUT ITS INABILITY TO ENGAGE IN SPECULATION OR PRINT THE RESULTS OF ITS OWN INVESTIGATIONS HAVE HELPED TO CONTAIN THE DAMAGE TO THE REGIME.

14. THE INABILITY OF THE FSLN TO CAPITALIZE ON THE ANXIOUS ATMOSPHERE THAT IT CREATED BY ITS DECEMBER 27 OPERATION HAS GIVEN THE GON BREATHING ROOM WITH WHICH TO CONSIDER ALL THE IMPLICATIONS OF ITS ANTI-SUBVERSIVE MOVES. THE INITIAL CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY STIMULATED BY THE INCIDENT HAS GIVEN WAY TO A CALMER, MORE DETACHED APPRAISAL OF THE THREAT. RUMORS AND REPORTS OF NATIONAL GUARD ABUSES OF CIVIL LIBERTIES IN THE INITIAL STAGES OF ITS INVESTIGATION AND PURSUIT OF THE FSLN HAVE NEARLY SUBSIDED AND THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE CENSURE OF GUARD ACTIVITIES IN THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. IN SHORT, THE WORST FEARS OF THE ANTI-SOMOCISTAS ABOUT PHYSICAL PERSECUTION

IN THE WAKE OF LOS ROBLES HAVE NOT BEEN REALIZED, A DEVELOPMENT
ACCOMPANIED BY SIGHS OF RELIEF BY WISE MEN ON BOTH SIDES
OF THE FENCE.

15. THE QUESTION IS HOW LONG THE NEW, LESS VITUPERATIVE MOOD
WILL LAST AND THE ANSWER CANNOT BE VERY POSITIVE. IN MOST OF
THE MANIFESTATIONS OF MOOD CITED ABOVE, IT HAS BEEN THE GOVERN-
MENT, USUALLY THROUGH OMISSION, WHICH HAS TAKEN THE INITIATIVE
IN ALLOWING GREATER LIBERTY. AND CLEARLY IT IS MOSTLY UP TO
THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO PROMOTE THE DETENTE.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MANAGU 02529 04 OF 05 301614Z

BUT WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT PRECISELY IS ANIMATING PRESIDENT SOMOZA
AS THESE VENTS UNFOLD. HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH US OVER THE
PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAVE CERTAINLY PORTENDED GREATER DECENTRA-
LOIZATION OF DECISION-MAKING AND A BOOST TO THE SAGGING IMAGE
OF THE PAGUAGISTA CONSERVATIVES (PRESUMABLY AS MEANS TO CON-
VERT THE PRO-SOMOZA VS. ANTI-SOMOZA NATURE OF THE CURRENT
STRUGGLE INTO THE MORE FAMILIAR--AND, THEREFORE, LESS THREATENING--
LIBERAL VS. CONSERVATIVE COMPETITION). HOWEVER, THE FAILURE
OF THIS LOOSE STRATEGY TO INCLUDE OTHER FACTORS, E.G. FREE ELEC-
TIONS, TREATMENT ON NON-PAGUAGISTA OPPOSITION, ETC., BRINGS INTO
QUESTION WHETHER THE CURRENT MOOD REPRESENTS THE FIRST HESITANT
STEPS TOWARD SACRIFICING SOME OF SOMOZA'S PERSONAL POWER IN
ORDER TO INSURE HIS PERMANENT INTERESTS AFTER THE PRESENT PRESI-
DENTIAL TERM, OR MERELY AN EXPEDIENT RESPONSE TO THE PARTICULAR
CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE POST-LOS ROBLES SITUATION. THE MAJOR
TRENDS ESTABLISHED DURING HIS EIGHT YEARS OF POWER OF GREATER PER-
SONALIZATION AND EROSION OF POLITICAL COMPETITION WILL MAKE IT
DIFFICULT FOR MANY TO ACCEPT ON FAITH THAT THE NEW POLICY WILL LAST
VERY LONG. FEW ARE BETTING, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SOMETHING SAID OR
DONE IN CONGRESS, OR BY CHAMORRO, OR BY SOME OTHER SOURCE,
WILL NOT LEAD SOMOZA TO REVERSE GEARS SUDDENLY.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MANAGU 02529 05 OF 05 301622Z

53
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 AID-05 PC-01

SCCT-01 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /069 W

----- 127528

R 301400Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7342

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 5 OF 5 MANAGUA 2529

ALSO, WHILE CENSORSHIP IN SMALL
DOSES CAN BE THERAPEUTIC, ITS CONTINUATION AFTER THE IMMEDIATE
NEED FOR IT DISAPPEARS CAN BE DELETERIOUS. IF CENSORSHIP
IS NOT LIFTED UPON THE TERMINATION OF COURT OF
INVESTIGATION'S WORK AS EXPECTED, IT WOULD STRONGLY INDICATE
THAT SOMOZA'S TOLERANCE OF EVEN THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF
POLITICAL COMPETITION IS SUSPECT. THE EFFORTS OF THE MODERATE
OPPOSITION, WHO ARE DEPENDENT UPON THAT MINIMUM TOLERANCE,
WOULD BE DISCREDITED, AND THERE WOULD BE WIDER-SPREAD CLAMOR
FOR DIRECT ACTION AS A CONSEQUENCE.

16. THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION REMAINS IN A REACTIVE POSITION.
THE OPPOSITIONISTS ARE FAIRLY LOCKED INTO A STANCE OF ADVO-
CATING THE END OF THE SOMOZA ERA IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN THEIR
CREDIBILITY AS GENUINE OPPOSITIONISTS. AND UNLESS THEY PER-
CEIVE NEW ALTERNATIVES AS A RESULT OF IMPORTANT CONCESSIONS
BY THE REGIME IN THE FORM OF FAIR ELECTIONS, NEITHER THEIR
RHETORIC NOR THEIR TACTICS ARE LIKELY TO CHANGE. IN THIS KIND
OF AMBIENCE, THE NEUTRAL FORCES, LIKE THE CHURCH
AND PRIVATE SECTOR, MAY WELL PLAY THE ROLE OF THERMOSTAT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MANAGU 02529 05 OF 05 301622Z

DETERMINING HOW HIGH POLITICAL TEMPERATURES WILL RISE. IF
THEY ARE ALIENATED BY THE REGIME, THEY WILL ECHO THE DEMANDS
OF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND ALLOW THE TEMPERATURE TO
SOAR; IF THEY COME TO A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE REGIME,
THE HEAT WILL PROBABLY REMAIN AT TOLERABLE LEVELS AND CHANCES
FOR THE CURRENT MOOD CONTINUING WILL IMPROVE.

17. THE MOST IMPORTANT VARIABLE, HOWEVER, CONTINUES TO BE
THE SANDINISTAS. STEPPED UP OR RENEWED FSLN ACTIVITIES,
ESPECIALLY URBAN TERRORISM, COULD RADICALLY DISTURB
THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT BOTH BY ATTRACKING NEW FOLLOWERS

AND BY FORCING THE GOVERNMENT TO ANTAGONIZE FENCE-SITTERS
IN ITS EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE TERRORIST THREAT.
SHELTON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MANAGU02529
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750226-0551
From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975064/aaaaacyv.tel
Line Count: 604
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 11
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 08 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <08 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <14 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSESSMENT: AN ERA OF BETTER POLITICAL FEELINGS SUMMARY: POLITICAL TEMPER WHICH PEAKED IN THE FIRST MONTH
TAGS: PINT, NU
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006